

**Minnesota Now (MPR) | Minnesota Now Minnesota Now - Iowa abortion rights
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CATHY WURZER: This is *MinnesotaNow* on MPR News. I'm Cathy Wurzer. Since the Supreme Court overturned the *Roe* decision that federally protected the right to have an abortion, decision makers at the state level are busy clarifying abortion access within their boundaries. Minnesotans who want an abortion can still get one, but neighboring states are now battlegrounds over abortion rights.

Iowa residents are already seeing changes to access to abortion, and more restrictions may be on the way. The headlines are almost dizzying.

REPORTER: The Iowa constitution does not guarantee the right to abortion. That's the new ruling this morning from Iowa's Supreme Court.

REPORTER 2: Governor Kim Reynolds breaking her silence on abortion legislation in Iowa since the overturn of *Roe v Wade*. Reynolds intends to revisit past state abortion legislation, some she spearheaded, and others put into motion by her predecessors.

REPORTER 3: Governor Kim Reynolds is again pushing for a 24-hour waiting period and a ban to abortions at six weeks. Just hours ago, she announced she's asking the Iowa supreme court to take up the cases related to those previously passed laws, knowing the justices will take the US Supreme Court ruling on *Roe v Wade* into consideration.

CATHY WURZER: Katie Akin is on the line right now to catch us up. She's a Political Reporter with the *Des Moines Register*. Hey, Katie. How are you?

KATIE AKIN: I'm good. How are you, Cathy?

CATHY WURZER: Thanks. Thanks for being with us. I'm fine. For folks maybe not paying attention to what's happening in Iowa, where does abortion stand legally in Iowa post *Roe*?

KATIE AKIN: So abortion is still legal in Iowa until about 20 weeks. The only change that's happened since the overturn of *Roe* is that now there's a 24-hour waiting period before someone can get an abortion. So they have their first appointment, they wait 24 hours, and then they can have the procedure.

CATHY WURZER: I'm wondering-- we just had this court case that struck down a lot of the remaining restrictions to abortion in Minnesota. In Iowa, I understand a recent state supreme court decision looks like it might pave the way for more restrictions. Is that right?

KATIE AKIN: That's right. So Iowa had a fundamental right to an abortion that was decided in a 2018 Iowa supreme court case. Just one week before *Roe* was overturned at the federal level, the Iowa state supreme court overturned that 2018 case and erased the fundamental right to an abortion in Iowa.

That means that it sort of remains to be seen exactly how far restrictions could go if lawmakers pass new laws on abortion. But Iowa does not have the same legal protections it did just a few months ago.

CATHY WURZER: Mm-hmm. Some states are considering constitutional amendments. Banning abortion, Kansas recently voted to reject theirs.

REPORTER 4: The Kansas electorate surprised pretty much everyone Tuesday by overwhelmingly voting against a ballot initiative that would have removed constitutional protections for abortion in the state. In fact, Susan B. Anthony Pro-Life America Spokesperson Mallory Carroll, who backed the ballot measure, told the *Washington Post* the vote was, quote, "a wake up call" for the pro-life movement.

Kansas Republican Senator Roger Marshall, also very much pro-life, was quoted by *Politico* calling the result a gut punch, saying, quote, "I'm shocked, absolutely shocked. But regardless, I respect the process."

CATHY I understand there's a similar amendment that could be on the ballot in Iowa in 2024. Is that likely to pass?

WURZER:

KATIE AKIN: So that amendment that's in the process, it's already passed through the legislature once in 2021. It will need to pass through the legislature again in '23 or '24. That amendment states that Iowa does not recognize the fundamental right to an abortion. It's kind of redundant now that the Supreme Court has already overturned their previous decision. But if lawmakers decide to go ahead with it, it's likely that it will pass the state house again in '23 and then be on the ballot in 2024.

CATHY Mm-hmm. Say, what are polls saying about where Iowans stand on abortion?

WURZER:

KATIE AKIN: The most recent poll by the *Des Moines Register* found that 60% of Iowans favor legal abortions in most or all cases. That's a little bit out of step with our current government balance. We have a Republican governor who does not support abortion and Republican majorities in both chambers of the state house who do not support abortion broadly. But a majority of Iowans say that they do support the procedure being legal at least sometimes.

CATHY I'm also wondering about those who are against abortion-- the opponents who are activists. What are they

WURZER:

focusing on in the Iowa state house? What are the next steps?

KATIE AKIN: So the next-- steps some opponents of abortion are still pushing to get this constitutional amendment passed just to make sure that a future supreme court couldn't change things up again and once again find a fundamental right to an abortion. Beyond that, our Governor Kim Reynolds is calling for courts to reinstate a law that she signed into law in 2018 that would ban most abortions after six weeks of pregnancy. That's called the fetal heartbeat law.

She's pushing for that law, which was blocked by the courts, to be put into effect. If that doesn't work, lawmakers may come back in January and pass new restrictions or just pass that six-week law again.

CATHY OK, so it sounds like there's a lot of churn still around the issue of abortion in Iowa.

WURZER:

KATIE AKIN: Absolutely. And a lot of legal questions remain too. It's unclear exactly how courts are going to rule on some of this. So everyone is sort of waiting for the next shoe to drop, if you will.

CATHY Mm-hmm. And by the way, what's happening with those who are abortion rights activists? What are they saying?

WURZER:

KATIE AKIN: Abortion rights activists are really making a push for people to understand exactly what the law is right now.

REPORTER 5: Iowa Democratic Party Chair Ross Wilburn released a statement reading in part, quote, "control over your own body gets at the heart of what it means to be free. And Iowa Democrats believe that everyone has the right to decide their own destiny."

KATIE AKIN: With all of the chatter nationally and in Iowa, some people are confused about whether abortions are legal at all. So many abortion rights groups are really just focused on putting out the message that abortion continues to be legal in Iowa for now, and holding protests, and events, and fundraising for abortion access groups.

CATHY All right. Katie, I appreciate the overview that you've given us. Thank you so much.

WURZER:

KATIE AKIN: Absolutely. Thanks for having me.

CATHY Katie Akin is a Political Reporter with the *Des Moines Register*. She's tracking the changes Iowa lawmakers and

WURZER: courts are making to abortion.